



MEMO

To: All Ongwanada Staff

From: Dr. Lak Chinta

Date: November 14, 2024

Re: CEO Update

Dear Team,

I have received valuable feedback regarding our direction and the vision behind these changes. The first step in any change management process is to ensure we have the right people in the right roles to build a cohesive team around change and transitions. This exercise is crucial as we focus on foundational processes. Historically, our organization has had fewer streamlined processes—such as the medication error and SOR processes, which have been in development for over seven years—this is totally unacceptable! We have had more committees and meetings, which detracts from our ability to focus on priorities such as staffing issues, onboarding processes, training, financial internal controls, meeting ministry targets, financial budgets, programming for supported individuals, admissions and discharge processes, and building cohesive interdisciplinary clinical teams.

I want to be upfront and clarify that, as part of any organizational change, it is normal to experience attrition due to restructuring. I emphasize that the recent departures, both voluntary and involuntary, can be attributed to various reasons that may not be known to all of us. I kindly ask for privacy and confidentiality regarding our former staff, and I understand that this news may be difficult for many of us. The senior leadership team makes these decisions after careful consideration, and we are committed to making the right choices for the organization, no matter how challenging they may be. Please know that these decisions and transitions have been difficult for us as well.

Our organization has been hindered by a lack of management tools (budget tracking, collaboration tools, data visualization) and management training. We have just concluded our scheduling and staffing review, which involved a total of 71 staff and 17 homes. We will launch our IT, Facilities, and Compensation reviews in November 2024. Additionally, we are developing a succession plan, and my performance goals are being established to hold me accountable. Each senior leader has outlined their priorities for 2024-2025, complete with timelines. The senior leadership team will be held accountable for their performance management related to these priorities. We plan to hold town hall meetings to discuss these priorities, our progress, and how we intend to engage clinicians, staff, management, and external stakeholders.

Following our foundational priorities for 2024-2025, we aim to have a new strategic plan in place for the next three years, starting in early summer 2025. I personally want to engage with staff and management in this process beginning in January 2025. This will be your three-year roadmap, and it belongs to each of us as we determine how we want our organization to advance together, setting realistic foundations for the future of our staff, supported individuals, and community needs.

This does not mean that my focus is not on addressing immediate staffing challenges. We have developed both immediate and long-term solutions, including an unprecedented recruitment campaign that will be launched through digital and print classified advertisements, partnerships with colleges, and community events. Lorrie and I met with the Senior Vice President at St. Lawrence College yesterday regarding immediate placements. We are also exploring retention strategies and operational efficiencies regarding our staffing complements. I have heard your feedback regarding low staff morale and the impact of staffing shortages, including onboarding, orientation, and training neglect. I understand how this affects our frontline staff, and I am committed to finding immediate solutions. I am also available to support staff on weekends if required to help those stuck at our homes.

We are pleased to announce new staff joining the finance and administration portfolios. Ms. Meghan McLeod, CPA, will be joining Ongwanada as the Director of Finance, effective November 25th, 2024, reporting to Darlene Ryan, Chief Financial Officer. This role is critical for supporting our financial operations, internal controls, and reporting, including passport services. Additionally, Ms. Katie Roberts will be joining Ongwanada as the Senior Director of Corporate Services, reporting to Lorrie Heffernan. Katie's portfolio will encompass human resources, communication and fundraising, and enterprise risk management (compliance/accreditation/QAM/OPRs, etc.). Katie will also be joining us on November 25th, 2024.

We continue to streamline portfolios during this transition phase. Effectively immediately, Complex Network for Specialized Care (CNSC) will transition to Lorrie Heffernan, Chief Administration Officer. Kim Fraser will be moving under a new division corporate compliance in the administration portfolio. Kim will be supporting compliance, accreditation, QAM oversight & OPRs risk management and health & safety for the organization.

The new organizational structure can be [found here](#).

I also want to emphasize and celebrate our successes in various areas. The organization was significantly impacted by COVID-19, and our volunteer numbers dropped from around 80 to approximately 40. However, in the last couple of months, with the help of the Best Buddy program, we have increased our volunteer count to around 60 members. This accomplishment is a testament to each of you who have shared our stories with the community and engaged them in making a meaningful impact at Ongwanada.

My heartfelt congratulations to all the participants in the OADD conference in Kingston last week. Although I was unable to attend, as I was at the "Reimagining the Disability Sector" conference in Toronto, I heard that the Ongwanada presentation in Kingston was outstanding and well received.

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication.

Warm regards,

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Dr. Lak Chinta
CEO, Ongwanada